Report from Poland

The German Problem and the Berlin Crisis Look Differently When Seen Through Polish Eyes

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From the Other Side of the Oder-Neisse Frontier

Warsaw

We Americans are conditioned by our press and by official propaganda to see the German problem largely through German eyes. I wanted to see it as it looks from the other side of the Oder-Neisse frontier, through Polish eyes. I had a Polish visa. I obtained a transit visa through the East Zone of Germany without difficulty and I set out one night eastward from Berlin. A taxi took me from my hotel in West Berlin past the floodlit monument celebrating Bismarck's victory over France in 1871 and the dimly lit Russian war memorial down to the Brandenburger Tor. There we were waved past by a guard on the Western side and stopped for a moment by a guard on the Eastern. He asked neither to see my passport nor to examine my bags. The driver explained he was taking me to the Eastern railroad station and would soon be back. In East Berlin, we sped past the smart shops on Unter den Linden and caught a glimpse on Alexanderplatz of the fact that East Berlin (like West) now has an "Automat-Imbiss" restaurant, American style. The Ostbahnhof, known as the Silesian station in the days when it was Kaiser Germany's gateway to the East, the beginning of that Berlin-Baghdad railway dream, is now the East's gateway into the heart of Central Europe. The bookstall was full of Communist (but no Western) papers from as far as China. The station swarmed with young East German soldiers setting off to their posts and with a crowd in holiday mood, among them many Slavic faces. There was much kissing on both cheeks and tearful farewells as we boarded the Paris-Moscow express at 9:08 p. m. for Poznan, where we were to change trains for Breslau, now Wroczlaw.

East Berlin "The Big City" for Them

In our second class carriage were a young Indian diplomat and his wife returning to service in their country's embassy in Warsaw, and a Polish carpenter from Danzig returning with his 17-year old daughter from a holiday in East Berlin. For him the sights of Stalinallee, Unter den Linden and Alexanderplatz in East Berlin were "the big city." It was his first visit to "the West" but he had not gone to see West Berlin. He explained that he worked in the Danzig shipyards. We talked in German—a language neither of us spoke well—and he said that while at first all was "verkehrt" (topsy-turvy) in the shipyards, now the workers were better trained and the work went well.

Apparently the news spread quickly that there was an American aboard the train and a man appeared from a neighboring compartment to deliver a short but passionate address in broken English on Poland's right to the Oder-Neisse territory. A small crowd gathered in the aisle to listen in, observing me with wonder as if I were a visitor from the moon. In less than two hours from Berlin we were past Frankfurt on Oder, and at the frontier. On the Polish side we passed many flatcars loaded with tanks moving westward, perhaps for spring military maneuvers. At 2:30 a. m. we left the comparative comfort of the Paris-Moscow express at Poznan to take the local going south to Wroczlaw (Breslau). This was made up of the hardest old-fashioned "hand carriages" I had seen since I travelled in early 1946 with Jewish refugees from the Polish-Czech border to Bratislava on the first leg of an illegal journey to Palestine.

How the Poles Feel About Adenauer

"Thanks to the existence of the DDR (the East German Communist State), we will never see Herr Adenauer on our frontier, unless indeed he should exchange the Crusader cloak he symbolically wears for the mantle of repentance, in order to come and beg our forgiveness for all we have suffered from German militarists and war criminals. And even then he would have to obtain a transit visa from the DDR."

—President Cyrankiewicz in Warsaw March 19.

The cars on the train to Wroczlaw were cold; the broken down windows would not stay closed; sleeping on the seats was like trying to sleep on the cold floor of a moving dungeon. Outside, as the sky grew gray, one passed towns still haunted by skeletal ruins. There was an overwhelming impression of wreckage and poverty. The thought that came into my mind was, "These are the lands to which the Marshall Plan never came." But while the industrial landscape was bleak and grimy, the dawn showed that the farms were well kept, the slender birches were lovely in the morning light and the fruit trees whitewashed against pest. At every stop, sleepy-eyed unwashed workers tumbled into the train bound for the factories at Wroczlaw. Our carriage was jammed tight by the time we got into its huge cavernous station. We had arrived in the industrial capital of the Oder-Neisse country annexed by Poland.

Not As Chic As Warsaw

Three years earlier we had been in Moscow and Warsaw. Wroczlaw is not as chic as Warsaw. Old women with wisps of broom clean the streets as in Moscow. The Monopol Hotel, to which an ancient taxi took us, was heavily and tastelessly ornate in the Russian manner. But the early morning streets outside reflected an enormous vitality. Everywhere Parisian style kiosks advertised theatres, cabarets and films. The opera house nearby was playing Faust, Carmen and the premier of a new Polish romantic operetta. There seemed to be bookstores everywhere, their windows crammed with technical works in Russian, Polish and Western languages. They were also well stocked with classics, sets of Shakespeare and Sigrid Undset, and with Jack London, James Fenimore Cooper and

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An Ebullient "Boosterism" Midwest Style Marks the Oder-Neisse Lands . . .

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James Oliver Curwood—just why the last two are so widely read abroad is a mystery; perhaps the Europeans still like to think of America as a cowboy-and-Indian frontier. The shops seemed full not only of consumer goods but of many luxuries—crystalware, fine porcelains and cameras. Crowds were waiting outside a big department store for the doors to open. The window displays were tasteful. Everywhere there were street stalls selling sacred pictures and cards for the coming Easter. There was also a shop window display by a Free Thinkers' Club in which I recognized a Polish translation of a once famous anti-religious work by Feuerbach.

An SS Fortress

I had a letter of introduction to the editor of the local newspaper, and he took me on a tour of the city. Warsaw was demolished by the Germans; Stettin, the seaport in the northern end of the Oder-Neisse was worked over by Allied bombers; Wroczlaw was wrecked in a long drawn out battle with the Russians. It was a German fortress and it held out long after the Soviet armies had bypassed it. The city was held by crack divisions of the SS and of Vlassov's renegade Russian troops; they had nothing to lose, and the city had to be taken street by street and house by house. A huge area of the city was razed by its defenders to create an inner airfield so that supplies could be flown in. Huge mounds of rubble over which the grass has begun to grow remain as monuments of the fighting, and even in the largely rebuilt center of the city, there are ruined houses and patches of wreckage. Wroczlaw looks like Warsaw did in 1949. "Warsaw had priority in reconstruction," the local editor told me, "but now we're beginning to get more attention." Before the war 800,000 people lived in Wroczlaw. Now there are 400,000. But in the city, as in everything which has to do with the Oder-Neisse lands, one feels a pioneering spirit, an ebullient "boosterism" Middle Western style. In Warsaw, as elsewhere in Poland, the exuberance of three years ago has faded with the promise of "October." The Polish spirit is slowly being tamed and proceeds morosely. But the Oder-Neisse lands harness nationalist fervor as well as communist fanaticism. Wroczlaw's famous railroad equipment shops, though entirely razed during the fighting, are now bigger than before the war, and I was to leave Poland later on a bright new shiny sleeping car manufactured in Wroczlaw. The city is being developed as a center for electrical equipment, airplanes, small autos, bicycles, chemicals and eletronics; it hopes soon to build calculating machines. Before the war, when the city was German, there were 3,000 students in its ancient university. Now, I was told proudly, there are 17,000 in the higher schools, including a new polytechnical institution, and it was hoped from these to develop the new cadres of engineers and technicians for advanced work in electronics.

The editor, Roman Werfel, told me that 70 percent of the city was destroyed in the war but that they hoped to have it completely rebuilt by 1964 or 1965. He showed me the historic sites of the city, in particular its Cathedral with its pure early Gothic arches, a lofty choir singing in stone. The Germans had their staff headquarters under the Cathedral and it was burned out in the fighting. State and Church are sharing the cost of its reconstruction. Ancient burial tablets within it mark the tombs of monks and knights with Slavic names, a prized testimonial to former ages when Wroczlaw was Polish. Across from the Cathedral is a monastery. Outside it is a bulletin board with a notice on it, "Parents you are responsible before God for the religious education of your children." It also has a typed list of approved moving pictures. The coexistence of Roman Catholicism and Communism in Poland grows deeper roots as a new generation is raised on a prefabricated "Marxism", imposed from above, absorbed with a minimum of persuasion and a maximum of mechanical compulsion, vulgarized in the process until little more than the slogans remain. In such a context, it is possible to have young Communists who are also good Catholics, piously accepting two sets of superstitions instead of merely one. To serve God and Marx in Poland is really no different than serving God and Mammon in the West.

As Seen Through German Eyes

"The second world war uprooted more than 18 million Germans. About 10 million of them had always been German citizens, with their homes in the German provinces of East and West Prussia, Pomerania, Upper and Lower Silesia and the Eastern part of Brandenburg. In these provinces lived 300,000 Polish-speaking people, but the Potsdam agreement of August 1945 placed these areas under Polish administration. . . . Another 8 million uprooted people were foreign citizens of German ethnic origin living in Czechoslovakia, Russia, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary and other eastern European countries. The families of these people had their homes in these countries for many centuries. Their ancestors had, at the request of Slavonic princes, brought law and Christianity, skill and craftsmanship to this part of Europe."

—*Meet Germany, Official Handbook.*

Where 300,000 Died in Lodz

I drove from Wroczlaw through the strikingly well-kept (perhaps because uncollectivized) Polish countryside to Lodz where the Grand Hotel seemed to be doing a boom business at tea time. The streets of the rather gray and colorless city were jammed. In the center whole blocks stood empty where the Germans had razed the ghetto in which 300,000 Jews died. From there we went on to Warsaw, where I was struck by the progress made since 1956. Ruins were fewer. The shops were stocked with consumer goods. Popular cafeterias and restaurants served good food. The people looked much better dressed and better fed than three years ago. It was in Warsaw, from Prof. Oskar Lange, Poland's chief economist and planner, and from a bright young Polish economist at the Planning Commission who studied recently at Columbia, a Professor Josef Pajestka, that I got a comprehensive picture of just how much the so-called "recovered territories" had played in Poland's reconstruction since the war.

Prof. Lange, one-time professor of economics at the University of Chicago, a Left Socialist who went home to Poland after the war, remains his old bubbling self, unmistakably happy and multifariously useful as a teacher of economics at Warsaw University and holder of half a dozen government jobs. He showed me a cartoon from the satirical magazine *Szpilki* (needles) which showed 14 Langes around one conference table, each with a different governmental title. One

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. . . An Interview With Ex-American Prof. Oskar Lange, Poland's Top Planner

Lange is turning to another Lange and asking, "Where have we met before?" He is, among other things, vice president of the Council of State, president of the Economic Council, chairman of the Planning and Budget Commission of the *Sejm* (the Polish Parliament) and a member of the Academy of Sciences. He received me in his office in the *Sejm,* an exquisitely beautiful parliament building, every detail of its white marble and metal work as impeccably finished as a perfect gem, and devoid of any "cult of personality" busts or portraits. I saw it first in 1956 after Moscow and again this year after Bonn; both times it was refreshing. It looks like a Capitol, and like the Capitol of a truly civilized country.

No Well Financed "Miracle" in Poland

Poland had the twin problems after the war of reconstructing Europe's most badly damaged country and of industrializing an underdeveloped still basically peasant land. It had to meet them with a sharply reduced labor force. Of 35 million Poles, six million—including 3,500,000 Jews—lost their lives in the fighting and in the crematoria. It had to tackle its giant tasks without that massive inflow of Marshall Plan funds, occupation dollars and substantial private investment which made West Germany's recovery a relatively easy "Wirtschaftswunder" (economic miracle). Today Poland's industrial output in real terms, according to Prof. Lange, is five times greater than before the war. Its industrial output is scheduled to increase another 80 percent in the next seven years and its agricultural output 30 percent. In this swift progress, the so-called "recovered territories" annexed from Germany played a crucial role. The Oder-Neisse question is not just a question of chauvinism for the Poles; it is a question of bread and butter. Without the new lands, their recovery would have been crippled. To lose them now would be to amputate Poland's most productive areas.

The bare figures are eloquent. The "recovered territories" are Eastern Pomerania (Poland's share of what was East Prussia), Western Pomerania and German Silesia. The latter two are the so-called "Oder-Neisse lands." The old German Reich had two areas of heavy industry—the Ruhr in the West and Silesia in the East. Poland by annexing Silesia acquired coal, steel and machinery. Twenty-five percent of the Polish people, many of them colonists displaced from the Eastern territories annexed from Poland by the Soviet Union, now live in the so-called "recovered territories" (so called because the Poles can claim that at many periods this constant battleground between Slav and Teuton was Polish). Between one-fourth and one-third of total Polish production is in the new western lands taken from Germany. These produce a third of Poland's electrical energy and almost one-third of its coal. The two Pomeranias are agricultural, and thanks to them the new territories account for 28 percent of Poland's grain and a fourth of its cattle and pigs. To lose these lands now would mean a sharp drop in Poland's standard of living, still far from high.

The industrial potential of Silesia was Poland's own form of reparations. Not all of it was as badly damaged as Wroczlaw and Stettin. Even in the badly damaged areas, the rubble yielded bits and pieces of valuable machinery; parts of buildings still stood, simplifying reconstruction. In the earth was wealth—coal, iron ore, sulphur and copper. On the earth, scarred and torn but relatively easy to rebuild was a network of railroad lines. With these, thanks to economic planning and dictatorship, Poland was able to make giant if painful strides forward after the terrible years of the war.

Heuss in 1939 Applauded Poland's Fate

"What in the years between 1914-1918 happened only by degrees, uncertainly and gropingly is now established at the very beginning as a recognized necessity. No intelligent man will even grumble against it. The naive and often dangerous crudities (Roheiten) of August 1914 have not recurred.

"There is no Englishman and no Frenchman who can seriously believe, after the overwhelming victory of the German troops in Poland, that it will be possible to redeem the 'guaranty' which their countries gave for the existence of the former Polish State. Whether the military and political events of September have a calming or an alarming effect is rather unimportant beside the fact that a position of power (Machtbestand) has been created."

—Theodore Heuss (now the liberal President of the West German Republic) writing on the defeat of Poland in Die Hilfe, *October 10, 1939, Herr Heuss was editor of* Die Hilfe *from 1933 to 1936, the first three years of the Nazi regime. This quotation, given me in Warsaw and verified in the New York Public Library, has never before been published in the USA. It illustrates the mentality the Poles fear.*

Poland's Basic Resources

These were the resources which Poland had available for its swift industrialization. First, like every peasant country, it had idle labor power on the farm, "hidden unemployment." Second, it had new idle capacity, even though much of it badly damaged, in the "recovered territories" with which this surplus labor could be put profitably to work. Third, it had in Silesia, in that battered railroad network, a relatively inexpensive means of soaking up labor from the countryside without the social costs of new housing in the cities. The new worker peasants could "commute" to work. Finally, postwar Poland had huge surpluses of easily mined coal available at a time of world-wide coal shortages. The price of coal, now $10 to $12 a ton, went as high as $25 a ton. In both Western Europe and the Soviet Union, the demand for coal was high. Before the war, Poland had produced about 33 million tons of hard coal a year. This jumped after the war to 70 million tons and now to 95 million tons. Much of this is needed at home. But the coal deposits of the new territories alone were enough to account for 25 million tons of exports annually during the best postwar years. With the new lands, Poland had not only enough coal for itself but a much sought after commodity with which it could buy the machinery and equipment needed to reconstruct and expand.

A few figures may be of interest. Before the war, Poland's rate of capital accumulation was often zero. Since the war, it has been running at a rate of about 8 percent. Much of this was achieved by a deliberate overemployment in industry. Untrained and inefficient workers made a poor showing by Western standards, but they produced *something* and that was a net gain over the idle peasant scratching himself in the sun. Total non-agricultural employment almost doubled in eight

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Ulbricht Regime A Buffer Against A Germany Which May Push Eastward Again

Poles See the Berlin Crisis As An Attempt at Stabilization

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years, rising from 3.6 millions in 1949 to 6.2 millions in 1957. The Silesian railroad network and its idle capacity made rapid absorption in industry relatively easy and inexpensive. Polish passenger traffic figures in billions of passenger kilometers are indicative. Here is a glimpse of pre-war and post-war:

1937	6.9
1946	15.6
1949	21.1
1953	35.9
1957	37.7

This steep rise in travel reflects a change of social habits and it also reflects the rise in the number of former peasants who "commute" to work in Silesia. This combination of idle plant, a railroad network, surplus farm labor within easy reach of the cities, and coal with which to buy equipment explains Poland's swift reconstruction, and each of these factors was contributed by the new western lands annexed from Germany.

Poland's Recurrent Nightmares

Of all the many people with whom I spoke in Poland, none had any illusions about the East German regime. But for the Poles, the German Democratic Republic represents an opportunity in which to gain time, and to solidify their hold on the new lands. The people in the new West of Poland are younger, the birthrate higher. In a generation, the Oder-Neisse frontier might become permanent, the new lands securely Polonized. The Ulbricht regime represents a buffer for Poland, the one German government which has accepted the Oder-Neisse boundary. Were West Germany to accept it, too, the outlook for Poland would be transformed. But since the German Social Democrats dare not (one of them suggested to me that the great Powers would confer a favor on the Germans if they among themselves made the Oder-Neisse a *fait accompli*) and the Adenauer government will not give up the hope of recovery, the Poles have no recourse but a close alliance with Moscow and support of Ulbricht's puppet regime in Pankow. Poland's history is a recurrent nightmare; it fears renewed German aggression some day with a nuclear Wehrmacht; it suspects that once again an aggressive Germany might partition Poland with Russia and create a new Russo-German entente at Poland's expense. When Moscow proposes a settlement on the basis of the status quo, i. e. a divided Germany, it speaks on this issue for all Poland. The Poles consequently see no reason why West Berlin could not be rendered secure by United Nations or neutral troops. They believe Khrushchev wants peace, sees West Berlin as a center of provocations, desires the stabilization of the status quo not a new source of conflict. "Khrushchev," one of them said, "wants to go down in history as a 'good Czar,' as a man who brought peace and a better life to his peole. He has little time; he is already in his middle 60's. He is looking for a settlement not for trouble. But he feels Russia's new power and wants a settlement only on the basis of the status quo."

As seen from Poland, the Berlin crisis is not a sinister plot. For the Poles, the sinister plot is the steady progress toward the nuclear rearmament of West Germany. They know that if the last war had stopped with their annihilation, the great majority of the German people would have applauded Hitler and settled down quite content to exploit the new Polish lands and their Slavic slave laborers. Their cities and their landscape are a constant reminder to them of what the Germans did so recently. The Oder-Neisse country for them is a small price exacted for German war crimes. They prefer Germany divided if it is to be rearmed. This is how they see it, and if there is to be peace with justice, their wishes and their viewpoints, too, must be taken into account.

Next Week: The Contrast Between Stalinist East Germany and Still "Liberal" Poland

The Words Which Pleased the Poles

"The reunification of the two parts into a single Germany which would be entirely free seems to us the normal destiny of the German people, provided they do not reopen the question of their present frontiers to the west, the east, the north and the south, and that they move toward integrating themselves one day in a contractual organization of all Europe for cooperation, liberty and peace." —*De Gaulle, March 25.*

This Is The Third Article from Abroad on the German Problem—You Can Start A Gift Sub With the First

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